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THE MUSICAL TIMES,

And Singing Class Circular.

MARCH 1, 1868.

ON CATHEDRAL SERVICES IN GENERAL, AND ONE BY MR. HENRY SMART IN PARTICULAR.

WE have now happily arrived at a period when the works of living composers are accepted, and occasionally used, in the services of our cathedral churches; and when those works are not, as a rule, expected to be mere lifeless reproductions of the style of a bygone age.

Many causes have combined in producing this effect, the principal one being, no doubt, the setting up of efficient choirs in parish and district churches, and the almost consequent adoption of a class of music which lays hold on the feelings and stimulates the devotion of the worshippers.

It must with justice be said that the music of the sanctuary had gradually deteriorated from the time of Purcell down to about twenty years ago. At first the downward movement was slow, Croft, Greene, and Boyce by their talents serving to retard it. But when it passed into the hands of Nares, Kent, and Clarke-Whitfeld the pace soon became headlong, and the ultimate abyss was reached in the music of Mr. Jackson, of Exeter. And after Jackson there came a dead pause (as well there might) of some years, at length broken by the production of a Service displaying more real genius (as well as eccentricity, unfortunately,) than could be found in any composition of the kind produced since the time of Purcell. The service alluded to is the one in E, composed for Mr. Martin Cawood, by Dr. S. S. Wesley. This was soon followed by others, notably those of Mr. E. J. Hopkins, Mr. Turle, Dr. Garrett, Mr. G. A. Macfarren, and Mr. J. Baptiste Calkin, which, while they display less eccentricity, are almost equally full of genius, and will contrast most favourably with any services that were ever written for the English Church.

But, to return to the Jackson period, there can hardly be any surprise felt if, at this time, the cathedral authorities formed the resolution of forbidding the purchase of any new music on the plea of the old being better—a plea which, at the present time, would be utterly unjustifiable,—but one does feel a little astonished that this rule should have remained in force in some cathedral and collegiate churches almost up to the present time. In this centre of civilization one might, only a short time ago, have examined the weekly lists of Services and Anthems performed at our two great churches in London, and looked in vain for the names of any of our modern composers. But, thank Heaven! times are now changed, and the example first set, at a well-known church in London of accepting and performing all music, no matter whether old or new, *only providing it be good and appropriate*, has been followed and acted upon, in a greater or less degree, by nearly all the cathedrals in England.

The cry that the art of writing Church music had drooped and died, never to rise again, has waxed fainter and fainter, but the marvel is it should ever have been raised at all. Any one who has studied the

history of this and the sister arts cannot fail to have noticed how, when one style has died, another and a different one has soon sprung up in its place to go in its turn through the eternal phases of growing, culminating, drooping, dying, and—rising again.

The style which was adopted by our English Church writers of the latter half of the sixteenth, and beginning of the seventeenth, centuries, was one which no liberal-minded man of our own time would hesitate to stigmatize as false. It was a style in which mere learned pedantry was the rule, and inspiration the exception; in which a multiplicity of parts and closeness of imitation was aimed at without any reference to the sentiment conveyed by the words. In short, the words appear to have been looked upon as a peg, so to speak, on which to hang abstruse musical problems.

No wonder, therefore, that about this time loud complaints were made respecting the intricacy of the Church music which, it was contended, produced confusion in the minds of the hearers, and was altogether un-edifying and artificial. These complaints brought about a reformation. A certain simplicity began to characterize the services produced by the following generation as will be at once apparent on comparing Rogers in D with Gibbons in F, but, on further examination it will also be found that the sentiment of the words was still comparatively unnoticed, and so continued to remain neglected almost down to our own time.

Here, a matter of the greatest perplexity forces itself upon our notice. How practised musicians like Drs. Croft, Greene, and Boyce—who were in the habit of writing devotional and appropriate music in the shape of Anthems—could by any possibility have set such utterly inappropriate music to the Canticles is almost past our comprehension. Viewed in the light of our own time it would appear ridiculous to set that glorious hymn of praise, the “Te Deum Laudamus,” in the minor mode, yet it was done by Tallis, Farrant, Patrick, Batten, Bevin, and others. Orlando Gibbons, it is true, gave us a major setting of the service, which is at once a very marvel of ingenious counterpoint and (considered in relation to the words) execrable taste. In saying thus much, we feel we are treading on rather dangerous ground, yet we still repeat that, in our opinion, this marvellous piece of vocal writing is a gross falsehood; it could hardly have been intended for the glory of God, but rather to the glorification of his own talent.

The revolution in the style of Anthem writing—which was inaugurated by Pelham Humphreys, and carried out by Purcell, Blow, and Wise—exercised some little influence upon Service writing, but unfortunately that influence was not destined to be permanent. Aldrich (whose tastes were decidedly archaic), with others, served to turn the stream again into its ordinary channel, and the opportunity for a healthy development of this class of Church music was thus lost and never recovered until our day.

We purposely omitted all mention of Attwood's name in the earlier part of this sketch for this reason, that, although his services were written in the early part of the present century, they were not published, nor, in fact, generally known to be in existence until a very few years ago, and consequently could have had but little effect in bringing about that movement of which we spoke as being begun by the publication of Wesley's Service in E.

There is no doubt, however, that Attwood's works will, as they become generally known, produce an effect the most beneficial, for they are melodious to a degree, and they follow the varying sentiment of the words with scrupulous fidelity. There is, however, one serious drawback to their ultimate success, viz., the utter absence of continuity. These Services abound in pauses and double bars. A movement of eight, twelve, or sixteen bars is the rule, then comes a pause and double bar. Now, it appears singular to us that Attwood, being a pupil of Mozart, should have fallen into this error, for breadth and continuity might be looked upon as a distinguishing characteristic of his great German master, and what still more confuses the argument, Attwood's Anthems display a continuity and development of subject which not unfrequently becomes a little tiresome. The explanation of this, no doubt, lies in the fact that his anxiety lest his music should not give a truthful colouring to the words caused him to err on the other side. We are satisfied in our own mind that the musical setting of a Canticle admits of the same amount of melodious treatment, the same development of subject (without any sacrifice of truthful colouring) as may be found in any of the works of the classical masters. We are, thanks to the great improvement in organ building in late years, in a very different position to those who wrote for the Church only fifty years back. Now we have mechanical contrivances which admit of organists playing the most difficult orchestral works; and, what is more, producing the greater number of effects which at one time could only have been produced by an orchestra; therefore, nothing can be urged against the employment of an organ in a more free and independent manner in the accompaniment of Church music.

With these few sketches and remarks we must at present leave the general subject of Cathedral Services, and turn to the new Service by Mr. Henry Smart, which consist of a complete setting of the Canticles and Communion Office.

Now, when a gentleman of Mr. Smart's position in the world of music sits down with the intention of writing a Service, one may rest satisfied that the music, as music, will be clever and musicianly. But the precise style in which it will be cast is a matter for further consideration. If we might judge from the fact that Mr. Smart's experience and education has been gathered in the classic (as opposed to the Church) school, we should expect his Service to be free from the blemishes incidental to a strict following of the latter school. But, on the other hand, we should fear it would be wanting in that depth and gravity which, as a rule, is only to be obtained by a complete saturation during boyhood in the ancient music of the English Church.

(To be continued.)

CREATIVE musical artists have no right to complain of any want of criticism upon their merits. Every tongue is ready with opinions upon their relative qualifications; every pen is anxious to discuss their genius, or their want of it,—to praise or censure, attack or defend them, according to the effect their compositions may have produced upon the speakers or writers before whom they have committed themselves for trial. Executive artists are perhaps even still more open to be minutely

analysed: the touch of the pianist; the bowing of the violinist; the tone of the wind instrument player; the voice, intonation, execution, dramatic feeling, and even personal attraction of the vocalist, are all freely commented upon; and no person who has not successfully passed this trying ordeal can expect to retain a permanent place with the musical public of our great metropolis.

But there is one class of artists—a class, we emphatically assert, of vital importance to the healthy progress of music—to which the attention of the public is never drawn. We allude to the Teachers. Who is there to sound the knowledge or ignorance of those who are elected (or who more frequently elect themselves) to the responsible post of educating the future professors and amateurs of this country? What guarantee have we that any person employed in this capacity has the slightest qualification for the office? This is an important matter to be considered in England, which may be said to be struggling for a name amongst the more favoured musical countries of the world.

Those who have had the care of young children, and who are conscientious in their desire to educate them in the best possible manner, become year by year more convinced how difficult is the task they have undertaken. Patience, watchfulness, tenderness, and firmness must all be combined in the character of one who would aspire to be a really good teacher; his temper must be thoroughly under control (for no person who cannot command himself can hope to command others); he must thoroughly understand the temperament of his pupils; and be able to illustrate by example the theory he endeavours to enforce. Admitting that these qualifications are essential for all who profess to teach the usual branches of scholastic education, is it to be supposed that music should be an exception to the rule? Do not little fingers require to be carefully trained; young voices to be tenderly nursed; untutored minds to be gradually cultivated? And can all these be effected unless the preceptor has, by self-examination and experience, acquired the faculty of winning esteem, whilst he exacts implicit obedience? What, then, shall be said of those teachers who sit tacitly by their pupils anxiously waiting until the prescribed time for the lesson has expired?—of those who rap the knuckles of their victims with a hard pencil?—who lose their temper and fling books about the room?—who read the newspaper, or sink into a peaceful slumber?—for we have heard of a professor who declared that he had so much to do that the only calm sleep he got was during his lessons. Could these things be were musical teaching considered an art; or if parents and guardians had sufficient knowledge to test the progress of those in whom they feel so deep an interest?

We have known innumerable instances of persons who have taken lessons of masters for years, and who did not know a crotchet from a quaver—who had never been taught time—had never heard of keys; and could not play a single scale; nay, we even recollect one lady who told us that she always imagined that the heads of the notes alone represented all that was necessary for the performer to know; and that the lines which linked together the quavers, semiquavers, &c., were placed above and below the notes to form a "fringe" or "border," for the sake of ornament.

There is no doubt that the root of this evil lies